

I Hear America Singing by Walt Whitman

BEFORE YOU READ

REVIEW SKILLS

As you read “I Hear America Singing,” look for the following literary device.

IMAGERY

Language that appeals to the senses. Although most images appeal to the sense of sight, they sometimes appeal to the senses of taste, smell, hearing, and touch.



Reading Standard 3.1

Analyze characteristics of subgenres (e.g., satire, parody, allegory, pastoral) that are used in poetry, prose plays, novels, short stories, essays, and other basic genres.

Reading Standard 3.7 (Grade 9–10 Review)

Recognize and understand the significance of various literary devices, including figurative language, imagery, allegory, and symbolism, and explain their appeal.

LITERARY FOCUS: CATALOG

A **catalog** is a list of things, people, or events that are related in some way. Whitman frequently used catalogs in his poetry, extolling and celebrating various people and aspects of American life.

Create Your Own Catalog Walt Whitman celebrates the qualities that make America unique or special. Imagine that you are developing an ad campaign to encourage people to visit the place you live in. Make a catalog of the things that make *your* town or city unique.

My town or city is unique because . . .

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

READING SKILLS: IDENTIFYING PARALLEL STRUCTURE

Parallel structure refers to the repetition of words, phrases, and sentences that have the same grammatical structures. When a writer uses parallel structure, he or she might use a series of adjectives, prepositional phrases, verb phrases, or sentence patterns. If you write “I sang, cooked, and washed up,” you are using parallel structure: You have used a series of three verbs in the past tense. If you say “I sang a song, I cooked a dinner, and I raked the yard,” you are also using parallel structure. You are repeating three sentence patterns that use subject-verb-object.

Whitman uses parallel structures as he catalogs the songs he hears America singing.

Use the Skill As you read the poem, mark up the parallel sentence patterns that are repeated over and over again. Be sure to read the poem aloud to feel the rhythmic effects of all this repetition.

I Hear America Singing

Walt Whitman

I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,
Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be blithe
and strong,
The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,
The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves off
work,
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat, the
5 deckhand singing on the steamboat deck,
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter singing
as he stands,
The wood-cutter's song, the plowboy's on his way in the morn-
ing, or at noon intermission or at sundown,
The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young wife at
work, or of the girl sewing or washing,
Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,
10 The day what belongs to the day—at night the party of young
fellows, robust, friendly,
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.



IDENTIFY

Circle the different kinds of workers the poem **catalogs**. Underline the word repeated in almost every line.

ANALYZE

What **images** do you see as you read the poem?
(Grade 9–10 Review)

INTERPRET

What is the **theme** in this poem—what is the speaker revealing about America?

FLUENCY

Read the poem aloud two times. On your second read, allow the rhythm created by the **catalog** to guide your interpretation.

I Hear America Singing

Reading Skills: Identifying Parallel Structure “I Hear America Singing” is full of parallel structures. In the chart below, list examples of parallel words, phrases, and sentence structures in the spaces provided.

Parallel Structure	Examples from the Poem
Repetition of words	
Repetition of phrases	
Repetition of sentence patterns	



Check your Standards Mastery at the back of this book.